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Introduction: Peirce's rhetoric and methodeutic

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The question of the relationship between Peirce's rhetoric – variously specified as “formal,” “general,” and “speculative” – and his methodeutic remains one of the open questions of Peirce scholarship. Although rhetoric was one of the earliest and most persistent components of Peirce's classification of the sciences, he never provided a full and detailed account of the scope and contents of this field of inquiry. In the 1890s, Peirce proclaimed that rhetoric was “the highest and most living branch of logic” (CP 2.333). Yet, by the time of the *Minute Logic* (c. 1902), a shift toward a more methodological conception of the branch in question was taking place; and in the 1903 *Syllabus*, rhetoric appears to have been definitely replaced by methodeutic, which in Peirce's words was to study “the methods that ought to be pursued in the investigation, in the exposition, and in the application of truth” (EP 2: 260). Still, Peirce's rhetoric made at least one significant – albeit fleeting – comeback in the 1904 essay “Ideas, Stray or Stolen, about Scientific Writing.”

Peirce's vacillation between “rhetoric” and “methodeutic” has led to a number of different interpretations concerning their relationship. Some scholars have argued that methodeutic is broader in scope than rhetoric (cf. Santaella-Braga 1999), while others have defended the opposite reading (cf. Bergman 2000; Colapietro 2007; Gava 2014: Ch. 2). Attempts to reconcile Peircean rhetoric and methodeutic as co-existent sub-divisions or focuses within the same branch of inquiry have also been outlined (Liszka 2000). While these different interpretative approaches show that the problem concerning the relationship between rhetoric and methodeutic, and, more broadly, questions concerning the role of the third branch of Peirce's logic, constitute a dynamic field of research, they also show that this topic needs to be further investigated.

The four papers in this special issue all provide fresh perspectives and new materials for the development of this relevant debate. In the first contribution, “Peirce's ‘Ideas, stray or stolen, about scientific writing’ and the relationship

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between methodeutic, speculative rhetoric, and the universal art of rhetoric,” Gabriele Gava challenges the idea that the scheme of rhetorical studies that Peirce presented in “Ideas, Stray or Stolen, about Scientific Writing” constitutes a classification of philosophical rhetoric, and endeavors to demonstrate how Peirce’s speculative rhetoric is to be distinguished from ordinary rhetoric and from the universal art of rhetoric. The second paper, “The problematics of truth and solidarity in Peirce’s rhetoric,” penned by James Liszka, contends that Peirce intended his rhetoric to be primarily a theory of inquiry, in which the establishing of solidarity is construed as essential for the success of the investigative endeavor. In this context, the contrasting descriptions of the aims of inquiry that Peirce provides should not be seen as conflicting with one another; they can instead be understood as rhetorical attempts to establish solidarity within communities with different aims. The third paper, “Speculative rhetoric, methodeutic and Peirce’s hexadic sign-systems,” by Tony Jappy, scrutinizes the puzzle of the apparent fading of rhetoric from Peirce’s logic, and argues that the rhetorical components of the theory may in fact have been absorbed by his mature account of interpretants as it is given in speculative grammar. According to Jappy, it is for this reason that the third branch of logic becomes methodeutic, which can be regarded as a methodological contribution to metaphysics. In the final article, “Methodeutic and the order of inquiry,” Mats Bergman highlights the relationship between Peirce’s methodeutic and his classification of the sciences. Supported by an examination of the hierarchical and dynamical considerations determining the order of inquiry, Bergman argues that the Peircean arrangement of the sciences is not merely a descriptive endeavor pursued in the retrospective “science of review”; the elaboration of the principles of classification and the first, partly prescriptive, ordering of inquiries ought to be construed as a central task for normative methodeutic. This reading qualifies and challenges the usual top-down reading of Peirce’s ordering of the sciences, and ends with a call for a more thorough reassessment of the role played by methodeutic and rhetoric in the Peircean account of inquiry.

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